

he must be very old.
poor fellow.
every time I hear his voice
again
I pour a tall one
take a good hit
knowing he's made
one more
night
along with me ...
typing away
here

HE LEFT (1983)

I was writing this poem
late at night
about a classical composer
but I wasn't positive I knew
how to spell his name
exactly
and I wanted to do the poem
right
and I wanted to do the poem
then
so I thought about phoning
anybody I might know
who knew how to spell
this composer's name
and it was then that
I realized how few people
I knew —
which was all right —
I decided to phone the
classical music station
I listened to each night
while drinking and
typing.
I got information
and they gave me the
number.
my call was answered
by somebody who said:
"Security ...?"
"listen," I asked,
"is there anybody there
who can spell this
composer's name?"
"who do you want?"
the man asked.
I spoke the
name.
"oh, he went home,"
the man told me.

"I know he did," I
said, "he's been dead
for 200 years"
the man laughed,
"sorry, I can't help
you," and then
hung up.

O TEMPORA! O MORES! (1984)

I get these girly magazines in the mail because
I'm writing short stories for them again
and here in these pages are these ladies
exposing their jewel boxes —
it looks more like a gynecologist's
journal —
everything is boldly and clinically
exposed
beneath bland and bored
physiognomies.
it's a turn-off of gigantic
proportions:
the secret is in the
imagination —
take that away and you have dead
meat.

a century back
a man could be driven mad
by a well-turned
ankle, and
why not?
one could guess
that what followed
could be
magical
indeed!

now they shove it at us like a
McDonald's hamburger
on a platter.

there is hardly anything as beautiful as
a woman in a long dress
not even the sunrise
not even the geese flying south
in that long V formation
in the bright freshness
of early morning.

— Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA